

60p

# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

OOBE experiments

Fox sisters' confessions

Telepathy without tears

UFOs and bent lights

Out of thin air

72



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# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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## In next week's issue

Peoples around the world have constructed great monuments of **Standing stones**. Their motives are the mystery that we probe in a new series. Further cases of unidentified people who seem to come from nowhere are reviewed in **Appearances**. The prophecies of a 17th-century Scot, the **Brahan seer**, were remarkably accurate – and are apparently still being fulfilled. The predictions of certain astronomers that we would make contact with intelligent Martians have been less successful – but the question of **Life on Mars** remains open. We present the testimony of a great scientist, William Crookes, concerning the authenticity of the medium Florence Cook and the reality of her most remarkable spirit – the pirate's daughter, **Katie King**.

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# Out of thin air

**Murdered men with no traceable past; navigators of medieval 'cloud-ships'; mermen – PAUL BEGG discusses these, and others, who have suddenly appeared to disrupt our comfortable and ordered view of reality**

THE FAINT HEARTS of some genteel young ladies hurrying about their business in the High Street, Chatham, Kent, received something of a shock on 6 January 1914. A naked man suddenly appeared in their midst and began running up and down the road. Nobody had seen a naked man in the area surrounding the High Street. Nobody had seen a man undress. The man's clothes were searched for, but could not be found. Finer sensibilities were saved from further offence when a policeman caught the man and took him to the police station. The man could tell nothing about himself and was eventually declared insane.

West Botley flyover near Oxford, England. A man was found dead – apparently having fallen from the flyover. The corpse eluded identification; the only clues were five handkerchiefs, bearing the letter 'M' – and a strip of foil containing 15 tablets of a drug that was so new that few doctors even knew it existed

In 1851, a man was found wandering in a village near Frankfurt-an-der-Oder in what is now East Germany. He could not explain how he had got there, but said that he lived in Laxaria in a country called Sakria. Neither place was or is now known to exist.

In 1975, a man in a neatly pressed pin-stripe suit was found dead, apparently having fallen from the West Botley flyover near Oxford. The manufacturers' labels had been removed from his clothes and the body bore no identification. The man carried five handkerchiefs, each of which bore the initial 'M', and a thin strip of foil containing 15 tablets of a new drug called Vivalan. The drug was so new that few doctors knew of its existence and those who did had prescribed it only to women, none of whom knew who 'M' was. The identity of the man has remained a mystery. 'M', it seems, had stepped out of thin air – presumably at some point above the A420 road – and plummeted to his death.

One day in September 1877, Mr W. H. Smith glanced at the sky over Brooklyn, New York City. He had never before seen anything in the sky except clouds, birds, and snowflakes in winter, and he probably did not expect to see anything different when he glanced heavenward on that particular day. In fact he saw 'a winged human form' and the sight so impressed and startled him that he wrote a letter to the *New York Sun* about it.

On 12 October 1976, eight-year-old Tonnlie Barefoot of Dunn, North Carolina,







linked to but separate from our own. As Evans Wentz put it in his *The fairy faith in Celtic countries* (1909): 'There never seems to have been an uncivilized tribe, a race or nation of civilized men, who have not had some form of belief in an unseen world, peopled by unseen beings.'

In the ninth century, St Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons in France, wrote in his *Liber de Grandine at Tonitruis*:

We have seen and heard many who are overwhelmed by such madness, carried away by such folly, that they believe and assert that there is a certain region called Magonia (The Magic Land), whence ships come in the clouds. . . . Certain folk have we seen, blinded by so dark a folly, who brought into an assembly four persons, three men and a woman, as having fallen from the said ships; whom they had held in bonds for certain days and then presented them before an assembled body of men, in our presence, as aforesaid, in order that they should be stoned. Howbeit, the truth prevailed, after much reasoning, and they who brought them forward were confounded.

## Enemy agents

What seems to have happened is that three men and a woman were seen or were said to have been seen descending from a 'cloud-ship'. A crowd gathered and became furious when somebody claimed that the strangers were the agents of an enemy of Charlemagne and had come to destroy the crops. The four people tried in vain to vindicate themselves, saying that they were ordinary people who had until recently lived near Lyons, but that they had been taken away by men who could work miracles and who had shown them marvellous things. The peasants did not believe one word of this and were about to

saw a little man 'not much bigger than a Coke bottle' who wore black boots, blue trousers and a blue top with 'the prettiest little white tie you ever saw'. The boy insisted that he had seen the little man and became very upset when his story was not believed. But disconcertingly for adult doubters, Tonnlie was able to show where he had seen the mini-man and a search revealed a clear trail of tiny footprints.

A naked man appearing from nowhere, a man from somewhere that does not exist, a tiny man with a pretty white tie, a 'thing' with wings, an unidentified corpse with a surfeit of handkerchiefs . . . For centuries reliable, sober people have been reporting encounters with people, creatures and 'weird things' that cannot be identified and in some cases seem beyond identification. In one sense it does not matter if the cited examples of these reports are true or capable of a rational explanation. Their importance lies in the fact that they reflect a belief in a world

Above: the tiny footprints allegedly made by the little man 'not much bigger than a Coke bottle' seen by Tonnlie Barefoot (right) of Dunn, North Carolina, USA, in 1976. The tiny man wore, among other things, 'the prettiest little white tie you ever saw' Not unnaturally perhaps, Tonnlie's story was greeted with some reservation by adults – until they found the footprints





stone the four strangers when Agobard, attracted by the noise, came running to see what was going on. He listened to the opinions of both parties and then pronounced that cloud-ships did not exist, therefore the strangers could not have descended from one and were accordingly innocent of the crime of which they were accused. The peasants accepted this, which suggests that St Agobard was blessed with an enviable silver tongue, and the strangers were released to go about their business. As for Agobard, he seems to have considered the whole business to be no more than a manifestation of paganism. He wrote despairingly:

The wretched world lies now under the tyranny of foolishness: things are believed by Christians of such absurdity as no one could aforesaid induce the heathen to believe, who knew not of the creator of all.

### The Magonians return

Despite Agobard's reasoning, the Magonians did not disappear but were still around 300 years later. In his *Otia Imperialia* (c.1211) the chronicler Gervaise of Tilbury wrote that one morning as the populace came out from mass they saw an anchor let down from a cloud-ship and accidentally become attached to a tomb. A cloud-sailor came down the rope hand over hand and freed the anchor.

When, however, he had torn the anchor from the tomb, he was caught by those who stood around, in whose arms he gave up the ghost, stifled by the breath of our gross air even as a ship-wrecked mariner is stifled in the sea. Moreover, his fellows above, judging him to be wrecked . . . cut the cable, left their anchor, and sailed away.

Gervaise's account is even more remarkable than St Agobard's but one should beware of attaching modern interpretations to these medieval tales. In context of the period they can be less than mysterious. The Church has long been obsessed with the godlessness of mankind, and the medieval cleric was obsessed with the concept of war between the agents of God and Satan, frequently seeing evidence of the battle in the most natural of things. Nevertheless, the story is still very interesting as one of the more bizarre examples of the strange creatures that were repeatedly reported during the Middle Ages.

Writing of his own time, Gervaise makes the remarkable and perhaps startling comment that in the British Ocean (the Channel) mermaids and mermen lived in considerable number. One of the most detailed accounts of a merman is to be found in the *Chronicum Anglicanum* by Ralph of Coggeshall, a chronicler contemporary with, and possibly a friend of, Gervaise of Tilbury. Ralph writes:

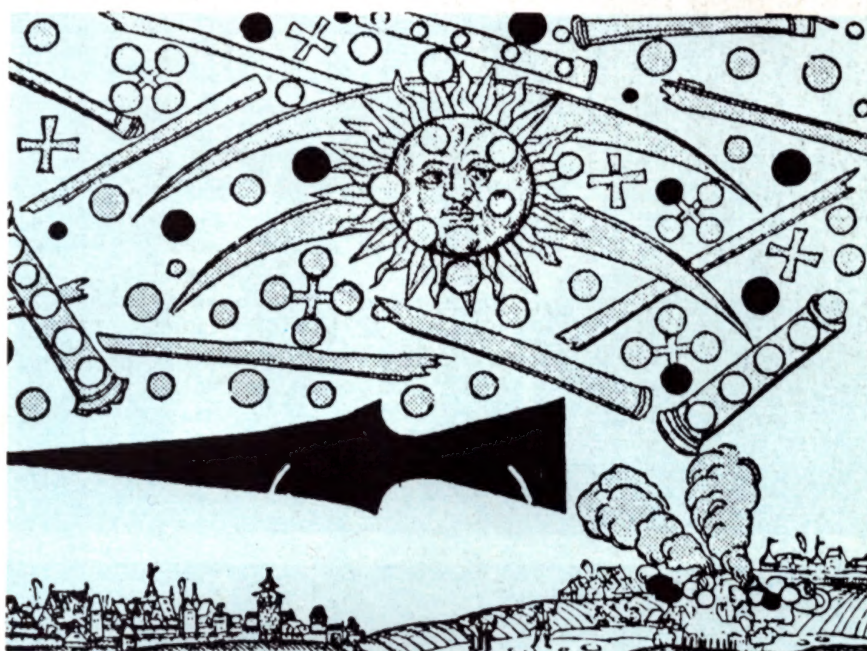
In the time of King Henry II, when Bartholomew de Glanville kept Orford Castle, it happened that the sailors

there, fishing in the sea, caught a wild man in their nets. . . . He was completely naked and had the appearance of a man in all his parts. He had hair too . . . his beard was profuse and pointed, and he was exceedingly shaggy. . . .

The merman was kept under guard for several days. He eagerly ate what food was given to him, showing preference for raw fish. When taken into a church he displayed no sign of reverence or even understanding. He also insisted on sleeping when the Sun sank and waking when the Sun rose.

He would not utter any speech, or rather he could not, even when hung up by his feet and cruelly tortured. . . . Once they took him to the sea-gate and let him go into the water, after placing a triple row of strong nets in front of him. He soon made for the deep sea, and,

Below: the 'very frightful spectacle' that greeted the citizens of Nuremberg, Germany, at sunrise on 14 April 1561. To the medieval mind the strange and inexplicable objects – and people – that suddenly confronted them were only to be expected. It is little wonder that the belief in the 'cloud-ships' that were reported in both France and England was so widespread



breaking through the nets, raised himself again and again from the depths, and showed himself to those watching on the shore, often plunging into the sea, and a little later coming up, as if he were jeering at the spectators because he had escaped their nets.

For some reason, after the 'merman' had cavorted in the sea to his satisfaction, he returned to the shore and stayed with the folk of Orford for about two months before going once more into the sea, this time for ever.

But whether he was mortal man, or a kind of fish bearing resemblance to humanity, or an evil spirit lurking in the body of a drowned man, such as we read of in the life of the blessed Audon, it is difficult to decide, all the more so because one hears so many remarkable things, and there is such a number of happenings like this.

The 16th-century chronicler Raphael Holinshed also mentions the Orford 'merman',





dating his appearance as 1197, the first year of the reign of King John.

Another bizarre story from the Middle Ages is that of the strange children who materialised at Woolpit in Suffolk. Their skin was green and they claimed to have come from 'St Martin's land', a place of perpetual twilight (see page 1241).

To the 20th-century mind these stories are outstanding examples, proof perhaps, of flying machines in the ninth century, of other worlds called Magonia and St Martin's land, and of a human being so well-adapted to the water that perhaps he could only be a descendant of the survivors of sunken Atlantis. But to the medieval mind such things were pretty tame, commonplace stuff compared to

Above: Orford Castle, Suffolk. Ralph of Coggeshall, the 13th-century chronicler, recorded that the fishermen of Orford had caught a merman (above right) in their nets. He was exceedingly shaggy, but otherwise he resembled a man. They placed him under guard and tortured him to make him speak, but he could not. He stayed with his captors for a total of two months before finally returning to his home under the sea

some of the many fabulous creatures that occupied the thoughts of the early Christian Church. In his *De Civitate Dei*, St Augustine of Hippo (345–430) wondered whether 'any monstrous kinds of men' were begotten by the sons of Adam. He tentatively concluded that the instance of abnormal birth supported the existence of creatures such as the Cyclops, another monster, which had its head in its breast, and Sciopodes, bizarre things that were able to run very swiftly despite the fact that they had only one leg, which could not bend. The single foot was so large that the creatures could use it to shade themselves from the Sun while they slept.

If the medieval mind could accept the reality of such fabulous creatures, it would



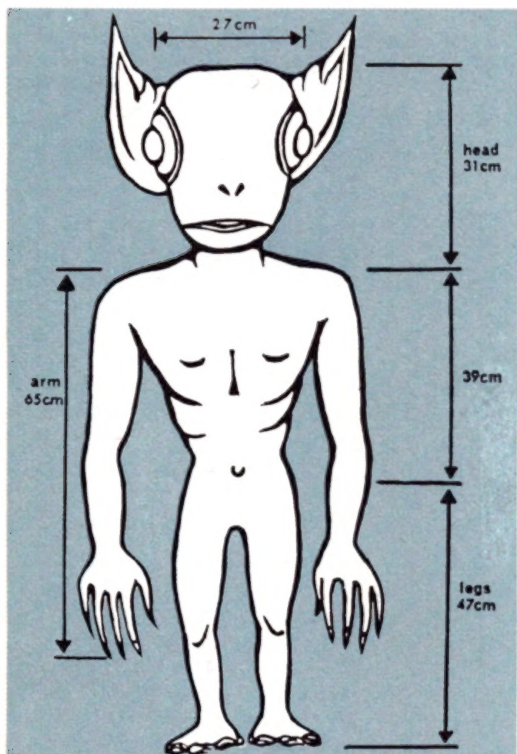
Left: some of the bizarre creatures discussed by St Augustine (345–430) in his *De Civitate Dei*: those with heads in their breasts, with only one eye and with only one foot. He concluded that these and other aberrations could be accounted for in terms of monstrous human births



have little difficulty in accepting Magonians, merfolk, and green children. And it is also interesting to note that, while the majority of the fabulous creatures described by people such as St Augustine have been relegated to the waste bin of discredited marvels, flying machines, merfolk and other almost human apparitions have continued to be seen throughout the ages.

One such well-documented story dates from 1955. On the night of Sunday, 21 August a 'little man' was seen approaching the Sutton family farmhouse near the small town of Kelly, to the north of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, USA. As the creature came to within 20 feet (6 metres) of the house, its arms raised, two of the Suttons shot at it. The creature somersaulted with the impact of the bullet, but it seemed otherwise unhurt and disappeared into the darkness. But there were more of them – and when the Suttons shot at them they, too, seem to feel no ill effects from the bullets that ricocheted off them – although they were knocked to the ground. The Suttons' hospitality to these 'little men', described as being about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet (1 metre) tall with large eyes and elephantine ears, consisted of shooting the contents of about four boxes of .22 shells at them.

Eventually the Suttons, frightened and alarmed by the creatures, abandoned their home and drove to the Hopkinsville police station, where they arrived in a state of excitement bordering on shock. Investigators later testified that the Suttons were genuinely agitated, that shots had been fired, and that no evidence of drinking had been found. The only conclusion that seemed possible was that the Sutton family really had seen what they claimed – but what was it?



When several small goblins approached the Suttons' farm, near Hopkinsville, Kentucky, USA, on the night of 21 August 1955, they were greeted with a hail of bullets. However, the little men kept on coming, unharmed by the shooting. The Suttons panicked and drove straight to the nearest police station, where they were said to have arrived in a state of considerable shock. Later a model was made of the goblins (above) and a sketch (left) by Pauline Bowen appeared in *The humanoids* (1969). What were the goblins – creatures from another dimension? Entities from UFOs? Mass hallucinations?

It is interesting to note that strange, white, large-eyed people had previously been reported in the history of the area.

The Kelly goblin is but one of an assortment of weird and wonderful creatures that have been linked with close encounters of the third kind. But the phenomenon is much more complex than it appears at first glance. The mystery of 'appearing people', which could include ghosts and even the Loch Ness monster and the Abominable Snowman, dates as far back as written records will take us. Of course historical sightings cannot necessarily be taken as fact and more recent reports – in spite of having been made by people whose veracity we often have no reason to question – have not proved sufficiently convincing to persuade sceptics that there is a genuine phenomenon to investigate seriously. But one fact cannot be disputed; for whatever reason, thousands of people have seen, and continue to see, weird creatures that, in our reality, are not supposed to exist. Why they are seen is another question.

*Murdered men with no past and wild people who appear from nowhere – see page 1454*



#### THE MISSES FOX.

Our readers, believers and non-believers in Spiritualism, will thank us for presenting them portraits of the "original rappers," the Misses Fox, of Rochester, who have made so much noise in the world. The likenesses are from a daguerreotype by Meade Brothers, of New York, and are therefore reliable. Since the origin of the rapping excitement in Rochester, in 1849, mysterious demonstrations of the nature of those of which the Misses Fox were the media have been signalized all over the world; they have given rise to books, pamphlets and newspapers without number, and the believers in their spiritual origin are numbered now by hundreds of thousands. The phenomena exhibited by the media are so curious, that learned and scientific men have felt it their duty to investigate them, and various are the theories by which they are sought to be accounted for. One of the most elaborate works on the subject is that by Professor Mahan. Prof. Faraday, of England, has also given the subject his attention, and honored it with his theory. Congress has been memorialized to appoint a committee of investigation; but as yet our legislators have not seen fit to devote their time to spiritualism. Of the ladies, whose portraits we present, it may be sufficient to remark, that no imposture has been found upon them; and that committees composed of the cutest Yankees, both male and female, have failed to discover any secret machinery or fixtures, by which the sounds heard from and about them might have been produced.



THE SISTERS FOX, THE ORIGINAL SPIRIT RAPPERS.

# Confessions and confusions

**When the Fox sisters admitted to fraud, the sceptics had a field day. But then the confessions were withdrawn. What is the truth about the acclaimed founders of Spiritualism? HILARY EVANS reviews the evidence**

THREE YEARS AFTER the epoch-making events at the Fox family home in Hydesville, USA, on 17 April 1851, a shattering statement was made at Arcadia, New York state, by a Mrs Norman Culver. She was a relative by marriage of the Fox girls, her husband's sister being the wife of their brother David.

She stated that for about two years she had been

a very sincere believer in the rappings; but something which I saw when I was visiting the girls made me suspect that they were deceiving. I resolved to satisfy myself in some way; and some time afterwards I made a proposition to

Margaretta and Catherine Fox, the 'discoverers' of Spiritualism. To many, the girls' experiences signalled the dawning of a new era, in which the living could communicate at will with the dead. Others, however, saw the girls simply as clever tricksters and were determined to expose them; but, despite numerous tests and investigations, the sisters were never detected in a hoax

Catherine to assist her in producing the manifestations.

She claimed that Catherine welcomed her offer, and proceeded to demonstrate how the tricks were worked:

The raps are produced with the toes. All the toes are used. After nearly a week's practice, with Catherine showing me how, I could produce them perfectly myself. At first it was very hard work to do it. Catherine told me to warm my feet, she said that she sometimes had to warm her feet three or four times in the course of an evening. . . . I have sometimes produced 150 raps in succession.

Such a statement, coming from so authoritative a source, cannot be lightly set aside, particularly as she demonstrated her ability to produce raps. It is impossible for us today to determine what motivated Mrs Culver's



revelation. It may have been simple love of the truth, or there may have been some jealousy to inspire the statement. On the face of it, her revelations seem inadequate to account for *all* the phenomena associated with the Fox sisters; but they do show how *some* of them could have been effected. Clearly, trickery cannot be ruled out as a possible partial explanation.

At the same time, it is a fact that the sisters were tested and investigated time and time again, and that never once were they detected in flagrant imposture. As their champion, *Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, pointed out, it was indeed likely that many of their feats could be reproduced by stage magicians, but these were accomplished performers and the girls had none of their skills or training. Greeley was impressed as much by the Fox sisters' failures as by their successes:

A juggler can do nearly as well at one time as another; but I have known the most eminent mediums spend a long evening in trying to evoke the spiritual phenomena, without a gleam of success. I have known this to occur when they were particularly anxious to astound and convince those who were present. . . .

#### 'An absolute falsehood'

But the logic of their defenders and the favourable findings of investigators were forgotten when, on 24 September 1888, Margaretta (now Mrs Kane) told a reporter from the *New York Herald* that she intended to reveal that their mediumship had been a fraud from start to finish. Her younger sister Catherine (now Mrs Jencken) arrived from England to support her. On 21 October a huge crowd gathered in the New York

Although Leah, the eldest of the Fox sisters, had not been involved in the original rappings at Hydesville, she was the first of the three to become a professional medium and, in the 1850s, held many private seances in the parlour of her New York home (right). She also co-operated in a wide variety of experiments, convincing the investigators that the sounds she created had nothing to do with the physical body and that 'the medium has no more power over the sounds than the investigators have'

In 1851 a group of researchers came up with an explanation for the rappings: when the Fox sisters' legs were held, the noises stopped; therefore the girls must be 'popping' their knee joints. Sceptics seized on this as proof of the mediums' deception – but still they could not account for the variety of noises or the levitation of tables that occurred at many of the seances



Academy of Music to hear the confession:

I am here tonight as one of the founders of Spiritualism to denounce it as an absolute falsehood from beginning to end, as the flimsiest of superstitions, the most wicked blasphemy known to the world.

The *New York Herald* described the reaction:

There was a dead silence. Everybody in the great audience knew that they were looking upon the woman who is principally responsible for Spiritualism, its foundress, high-priestess and demonstrator. She stood upon a little pine-table with nothing on her feet but stockings. As she remained motionless loud, distinct rappings were heard, now in the flies, now behind the scenes, now in the gallery. . . . Mrs Kane became excited. She clapped her hands, danced about and cried: 'It's a fraud! Spiritualism is a fraud from beginning to end! It's all a trick! There's no truth in it!' A whirlwind of applause followed.

It should have been the death-blow to the movement for whose birth Margaretta had been responsible. But though perhaps a majority of those present were convinced, others were not; and their reservations were justified just over a year later when first Catherine and then Margaretta took back their confessions. Margaretta told a reporter from *The Celestial City*, a New York Spiritualist paper:

Would to God that I could undo the





## Fox sisters

injustice I did the cause of Spiritualism when, under the strong psychological influence of persons inimical to it, I gave expression to utterances that had no foundation in fact.

She insisted that the charges she had made against Spiritualism had been 'false in every particular'. She refused to say who had put pressure on her, but mentioned that 'persons high in the Catholic Church did their best to have me enter a convent.' She had in fact been converted to the Catholic faith soon after the death of her husband, whom she had married at the age of 16 and lived with only briefly.

She also blamed her sister Leah, accusing her of having drawn Catherine and herself into the career of mediumship. It may well be the case that Leah encouraged her younger sisters, and perhaps, as the most practical and far-sighted of the family, she had taken upon herself the decision to commit the three of them to a course of life that could not but put great social and

Right: the Swedish singer Jenny Lind who, after attending a seance held by the Fox sisters, was convinced that the mediums were genuine

Below: Margaretta's husband, the Arctic explorer Elisha Kent Kane. His letters and verses contained many references to his wife's 'deceit' and implored, 'Do avoid spirits.' After Kane's death in 1857, Margaretta agreed to the publication of this damning evidence, thereby implying that she had – as accused – been guilty of cheating



emotional stress on them all. But never at any previous time had there been any sign that this was resented by her sisters, nor that she was eager where they were reluctant.

What, then, was the truth behind the confessions made and withdrawn? Certainly one fact must be faced: if Margaretta could produce trick raps on the stage in demonstration of her ability to cheat, there is a strong presumption that those tricks had been used in the course of her mediumship – for why otherwise would she have developed the necessary skill?

The suggestion that she cheated, at least some of the time, is confirmed from an unexpected source: her husband. The eminent Arctic explorer Elisha Kent Kane had fallen in love with Margaretta when she was only 13; for three years, against his family's opposition, he courted and helped her, finally marrying her – only to die shortly afterwards, of illness, away from her in Cuba. Distracted by grief, Margaretta published the letters and verses he had written to her during those years: they contain abundant evidence that he believed her to cheat. 'Oh Maggie,' he wrote in one letter, 'are you never tired of this weary, weary sameness of continual deceit?' And in another, 'Do avoid "spirits". I cannot bear to think of you as engaged in a course of wickedness and deception.' His verses echo the same sentiments:

Then the maiden sat and wept,  
Her hand upon her brow;  
So long this secret have I kept,  
I can't forswear it now.  
It festers in my bosom,  
It cankers in my heart,  
Thrice cursed is the slave fast chained  
To a deceitful art.

The fact that Margaretta allowed such incriminating documents to be published suggests that she was conscious of having used



trickery; but if we accept the account she presented in 1888, of total deceit from start to finish, we find ourselves faced with almost as many difficulties as if we accept all as genuine. One of the many eminent sitters with the Fox sisters was the singer Jenny Lind, who perceptively distinguished between the physical and the mental phenomena: 'If it were possible for you to make these sounds, I know it is impossible for you to answer the questions I have had answered this evening.'

### Reporters at the ready

Dozens of testimonials survive, recorded at the time by sitters who were convinced – often despite their previous scepticism – of the Fox sisters' psychic ability. If some visitors erred by excessive gullibility, others surely made up for it by implacable scepticism; and at all times there were reporters on hand, eager to seize on anything the least suspicious. All who investigated in hope of exposing the mediums as frauds came away frustrated.

This is not to say that the sisters' manifestations were accepted for what they purported to be. There were many, like Horace Greeley, who admitted the genuineness of the phenomena as phenomena, but retained an open mind as to their nature:

Whatever may be the origin or cause of the 'rappings', the ladies in whose presence they occur do not make them. We tested this thoroughly and to our entire satisfaction. . . . The ladies say they are informed that this is but the beginning of a new era, in which spirits clothed in the flesh are to be more closely and palpably connected with those who have put on immortality; that the manifestations have already appeared in many other families, and are destined to be diffused and rendered clearer, until all who will may communicate freely with their friends who have shuffled off this mortal coil. Of all this we know nothing, and shall guess nothing; but if we were simply to print the questions we asked and the answers we received, during a two-hours uninterrupted conference with the 'rappers', we should be accused of having done so expressly to sustain the theory which regards these manifestations as the utterances of departed spirits.

It seems not merely charitable but reasonable to attribute the 'confessions' of the two younger sisters to the strains of their personal predicament. Both had been school-girls when the events started, and throughout the early years; both had been swept from a rural obscurity to a prominent position in one of the world's greatest cities. The tragic end of Margaretta's story-book love affair would have unbalanced a girl far less precariously situated; she took to drink



The cornerstone of a shrine to modern Spiritualism, which stands at the rear of the replica of the Fox cottage in Hydesville, USA. The building of the shrine started in 1955, but it was left uncompleted

and drugs, as did her sister Catherine before her own marriage to the lawyer Henry Jencen; though this brought her two children, it was also terminated by his abrupt and early death.

In these circumstances, and perhaps influenced by the enemies of Spiritualism, it would not be surprising if the two sisters, neither of them notably intelligent at the best of times (Crookes was scathing about Catherine's intellectual limitations), reached a state of confusion in which the truth and the falsehood of their careers became inextricably confounded.

In 1904, when all the Fox sisters were dead, a wall of their old home at Hydesville collapsed: among the debris exposed there were found the remains of a body. Whose body it had been, it was impossible to determine: but it is a curious confirmation of the 'messages' that had been given to the Fox sisters half a century before. From this it does not necessarily follow that the information came from the spirit of the dead man, but it would demonstrate that the Fox sisters' careers were, at the very least, founded in truth.

Whether, as time went on and the pressure on them to produce phenomena to order increased, the Fox sisters 'helped out the spirits' by resorting to trickery, must be a matter for individual judgement; the girls were never detected in imposture, and the evidence for it is only circumstantial. But the presumption is there: and it is hard to believe that the Fox sisters could have been induced to make confessions that were totally false, without the least shade of guilt to provide a lever for those who sought to persuade them to confess. In its confusion of truth and falsehood, in its baffling ambiguity, the career of the Fox sisters seems to be a paradigm of Spiritualism itself.

### Further reading

- Emma Hardinge Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism* (New York) 1870
- R. G. Medhurst (ed.), *Crookes and the spirit world*, Souvenir 1972
- Frank Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, Methuen 1902
- Mariam B. Pond, *The unwilling martyrs*, Spiritualist Press 1947



# Telepathy without tears

**Sensory deprivation can be an instrument of torture, but in parapsychology it has provided the means for some remarkably successful experiments in telepathy. GUY LYON PLAYFAIR explains the technique of the Ganzfeld**

THE SUBJECT LIES DOWN on a mattress on the floor of a quiet room in the psychology department of the University of Cambridge in England. Halved ping-pong balls are taped over his eyes, a red light is switched on a few feet above his head, and through the headphones he wears, an amplifier beams a steady stream of hissing, crackling 'white noise'. He is not about to be hypnotised – or tortured. He is in what psychologists call the *Ganzfeld* (German for 'whole field'), a state in which, though fully conscious and alert, he has been deprived of normal visual and auditory impressions. He is about to take

Bottom: throughout a Ganzfeld session the subject is bathed in a red light

Inset: subject Heidi Bartlet relaxes while Dr Sargent adjusts halved ping-pong balls over her eyes. These – and the red light – effectively block out all visual 'noise' (normal sensory stimulation), while Heidi listens to muted white noise through the headphones







Above: Dr Sargent adjusts the level of white noise so that it blocks out all sound – while remaining comfortable for the subject

Above right: while the subject speaks her mental impressions into a microphone, Dr Sargent writes them down in the next door control room. Although her 'mentation' is taped, the written record is the basis for the later marking session

Right: a graph showing where Dr Sargent's subjects placed the target out of a pool of four pictures. By November 1981 there had been 458 experiments; out of these no less than 179 placed the target picture first, 114 placed it second, 93 third and 72 fourth. The 179 who were successful represent 39.08 per cent of the total number of experiments – the probability of getting such a high score is one in 100 million

part in an experiment in planned telepathic transmission.

'Our brains are programmed to respond to changing events,' explains Dr Carl Sargent, who is in charge of the Ganzfeld experiments at Cambridge. 'And if there is no change in our visual or auditory input, then maybe the brain will respond to the ESP channel.'

He clicks his stopwatch. 'Right,' he says, 'the experiment has begun.' In the adjoining control room, his assistant switches on a tape recorder and watches the subject through a one-way mirror. Then Sargent goes down the corridor to another room, sits down, and begins to stare at a picture, one of a set of four that has been selected for the occasion from 60 sets by a complex random process, so that neither he nor anyone else has any idea in advance what it will be.

Today's target picture is a landscape painting by the 19th-century Italian artist Giuseppe Palizzi. It shows a peaceful rural scene. In the foreground, an animal is being led towards the rustic house on the left, passing a large rock behind which there is a flat and barren landscape dominated by a large triangular-topped mountain, like a flattened pyramid, with a circular lake below it.

Sargent's task is to try to 'send' the contents of the picture into the mind of the subject in the other room. He focuses all his attention on the painting – its shape, colours and content – and he writes down some of the associations it has for him. 'Rather like the surface of the Moon,' he notes.

Meanwhile, the subject has settled down in his Ganzfeld environment. He finds it pleasant and relaxing, and soon, as instructed, he begins to speak into the microphone beside him, saying whatever occurs to him. After seven minutes, he says:

'Ah yes, there we go! Very clear. Dark animal standing on a rock, and a blue background. Mountain, blue – very clear, that.' A few minutes later, he adds: 'Looks more like

the detail of a rock now. Very clear.' And:

'Like a pyramid seen from the air – rocks – same as before. Like the top of Mount Everest or something. It's a very bleak landscape. . . . Big blob in the middle – perhaps it's the hole in the Earth?'

Finally, after 21 minutes in the Ganzfeld, the subject appears to score a direct hit:

'I'm still getting this desolate *Moon landscape*.'

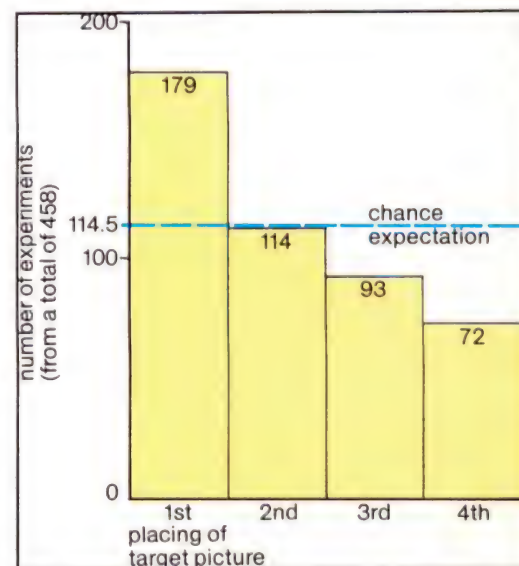
### Dipping into the pool

When the experiment ends, after about half an hour, the assistant comes in, helps the subject remove the ping-pong balls, and shows him a duplicate set of the four pictures from which the target was selected. At this stage, the assistant has no idea which one it was. She then goes through her notes, and asks the subject to match each statement he made to one or more of the pictures, scoring from 0 for no resemblance at all, to 99 for very strong resemblance.

The first picture is a news photograph of a naked undergraduate riding a bicycle along King's Parade in Cambridge. The second is a painting of some china ornaments and animals, the third is the Palizzi landscape, and the fourth is a cartoon by Heath Robinson showing an elderly couple rowing a boat.

The subject is confused. He immediately sees that the general shape and appearance of the cartoon are similar to those of the image he saw: the artist has drawn the white waves in such a way as to suggest a jagged lunar landscape, and the boat is roughly the shape of the rock he described. But there are several elements in the Palizzi that correspond to his impressions, and the second picture shows a china animal standing on a rock against a blue background. He seems to have picked up certain features of three of the four pictures, but when his scores are added up, the cartoon comes first and the Palizzi second, the china ornaments third and the naked student last.

Sargent now comes into the room and







shows the subject his notes and the correct target picture. With hindsight, the subject wonders why he did not choose the Palizzi, and is impressed by the fact that both he and Sargent should refer specifically to a Moon landscape.

This single experiment proves nothing. Chance alone would predict that the subject should, at the end of the experiment, pick the correct target out of the target pool once every four times, giving a success rate of 25 per cent. But by the end of April 1981, after running a total of 412 sessions involving 146 different subjects, Sargent had come up with results that are very difficult to ascribe to chance alone. In these sessions, 37.9 per cent of first choices have been correct, and the percentages of rating the target picture respectively second, third and fourth have been 25.2, 20.4 and 16.5. In other words, there have been over 50 per cent more correct first choices than chance should predict. That this is due to consistently successful guesswork is statistically highly improbable. It is also of interest that almost twice as many first- or second-choice guesses as third or fourth have been correct.

In one series of experiments, Sargent set out to see if previously successful subjects would do better than previously unsuccessful ones. They certainly did. While the latter group scored 27.3 per cent correct first choices, almost exactly what they could be expected to score by chance or guesswork, the former achieved a hit rate of 83 per cent, a figure that could be attributed to guesswork only six times in 100,000. Successful Ganzfeld subjects, it seems, are likely to become more successful. In other words, *telepathic receptivity can be learned*.

The subject who had failed to score a correct first choice in the experiment described above decided to see if he, too, could improve – straight away. At his suggestion, he and Sargent held a test session later that

evening, with Sargent 'sending' a picture from his Cambridge home to the subject in London. It was agreed that the session would begin at 11.45 p.m., and for half an hour the subject, lying in his darkened bedroom with his eyes closed, received no impression at all. Then, 35 minutes after Sargent had actually stopped trying to transmit, the subject had a clear vision of a figure standing on a pedestal with a bright light behind it. After trying for a further 10 minutes, he saw the same image again, and then went to sleep, after jotting down his impression. Later, he learned that the picture Sargent had been concentrating on was Blake's *Glad day* – which shows a figure standing on a rock with a bright light behind it. Another coincidence?

Some successful subjects have described their target picture in uncannily precise



Top: Heidi Bartlet chooses the correct target picture out of the pool of four. Dr Sargent has discovered that Ganzfeld subjects can *learn* to get direct 'hits' consistently

Above: the scene by the 19th-century Italian artist Giuseppe Palizzi, which was the target picture in one notable experiment. Dr Sargent, who was the 'sender', noted down the phrase 'rather like the surface of the Moon'. The subject remarked during his mentation period, 'I'm still getting this desolate Moon landscape.' Coincidence?

detail. Hugh Ashton, one of Carl Sargent's regular collaborators, remarked during a test with himself as subject: 'I keep thinking of firemen and a fire station.' The target picture was of firemen in training at a fire station, and Ashton even mentioned that one fireman had his face towards the camera, a detail Sargent had not consciously noticed while transmitting. Such incidents raise the question of whether the sender is in fact sending by telepathy or the subject is receiving his impressions by clairvoyance.

There is even evidence for some unexpected precognitive side-effects in Ganzfeld studies. A Dutch journalist dreamed the night before his test that the target would be a surrealistic painting by Magritte. It turned out to be a Dali – the only surrealist work in Sargent's entire pool of pictures. Writer Roy Stemman made a correct first choice on his first attempt, but also reported images of Spanish dancers and a Mayan temple, which had nothing to do with the target. He then went home, switched on his television and found himself looking at Spanish-style dancing in a film about Mexico.

The original idea for Ganzfeld research



came from US parapsychologist Charles Honorton, while he was at the Maimonides Medical Center in New York carrying out experiments in dream telepathy. He kept noticing that most reports of spontaneous telepathy over the previous century had come from people who were in a highly relaxed state at the time, whether asleep, convalescing, or just doing nothing in particular. Therefore, he reasoned, instead of making people sit and guess ESP Zener cards *ad nauseam*, why not try to recreate the conditions under which telepathy seemed to happen in real life?

### Alert – but dreaming

Attempts to transmit images to dreamers were highly successful, he found, but they took far too long. All night, in fact. He considered that the Ganzfeld environment was an analogue of the dream state, and that by placing somebody in it he would be creating an environment in which psychic experience could be expected to flourish, as indeed it did. By 1977, Honorton was able to report that not only had his own eight experiments, involving a total of 267 sessions, given significant positive results, but that 10 other researchers had been able to repeat them just as successfully or more so, to a degree he described as 'highly significant by the most conservative estimate'.

Carl Sargent makes no secret of his enthusiasm for his Ganzfeld work, which he first tried, with himself as subject, on a visit to Honorton's laboratory in 1978. 'It had a very powerful effect on me psychologically,' he says. 'I found it really did produce an altered state of consciousness, and I even had an incipient out-of-the-body experience.'



Top: the late Dr Kit Pedler taking part in a Cambridge Ganzfeld experiment

Above: Charles Honorton, the US parapsychologist who discovered the efficacy of the Ganzfeld

Left: *Glad day* by William Blake. This was a target that the subject failed to place first – but successfully picked up during a long-distance telepathy experiment that night



### Further reading

Charles Honorton, *Psi and states of awareness*, Parapsychology Foundation (New York) 1978  
Kit Pedler, *Mind over matter*, Thames Methuen 1981  
Carl L. Sargent, *Exploring psi in the Ganzfeld*, Parapsychology Foundation (New York) 1980

Subsequently, he achieved considerable success both as subject and as sender, and has found, by studying the psychological questionnaires he gives all his subjects, that extroverted types are far more likely to be successful than introverts.

He himself is the most exuberant of extroverts. 'Ganzfeld work is, above all, tremendous fun,' he says. 'People really enjoy it, and they keep coming back for more.' Yet however much he enjoys his work, he takes it very seriously. As the first person to be awarded a Ph.D. for a thesis on a parapsychological topic, and as a full-time parapsychologist (of whom in 1981 there were only about half a dozen in the whole of Britain, and probably not more than 30 in the West), he is well aware of the need to achieve scientific respectability if his subject is to attract the attention of other scientists and to encourage funding. Thanks to him, parapsychology became part of the syllabus for Cambridge undergraduates, and by 1981 eight of them had volunteered to undergo training in it.

Ganzfeld research is one of the most promising fields of parapsychology to have emerged since the metal bending of the mid 1970s, and it offers considerable promise for at least two reasons:

First, it has produced a very consistent and high repeatability rate, and second, it is largely fraud-proof, as there is no opportunity for the subject to cheat – deliberately or subliminally. It is also a clear example of a parapsychological hypothesis being put to the test and successfully repeated elsewhere, a standard requirement of any branch of science.

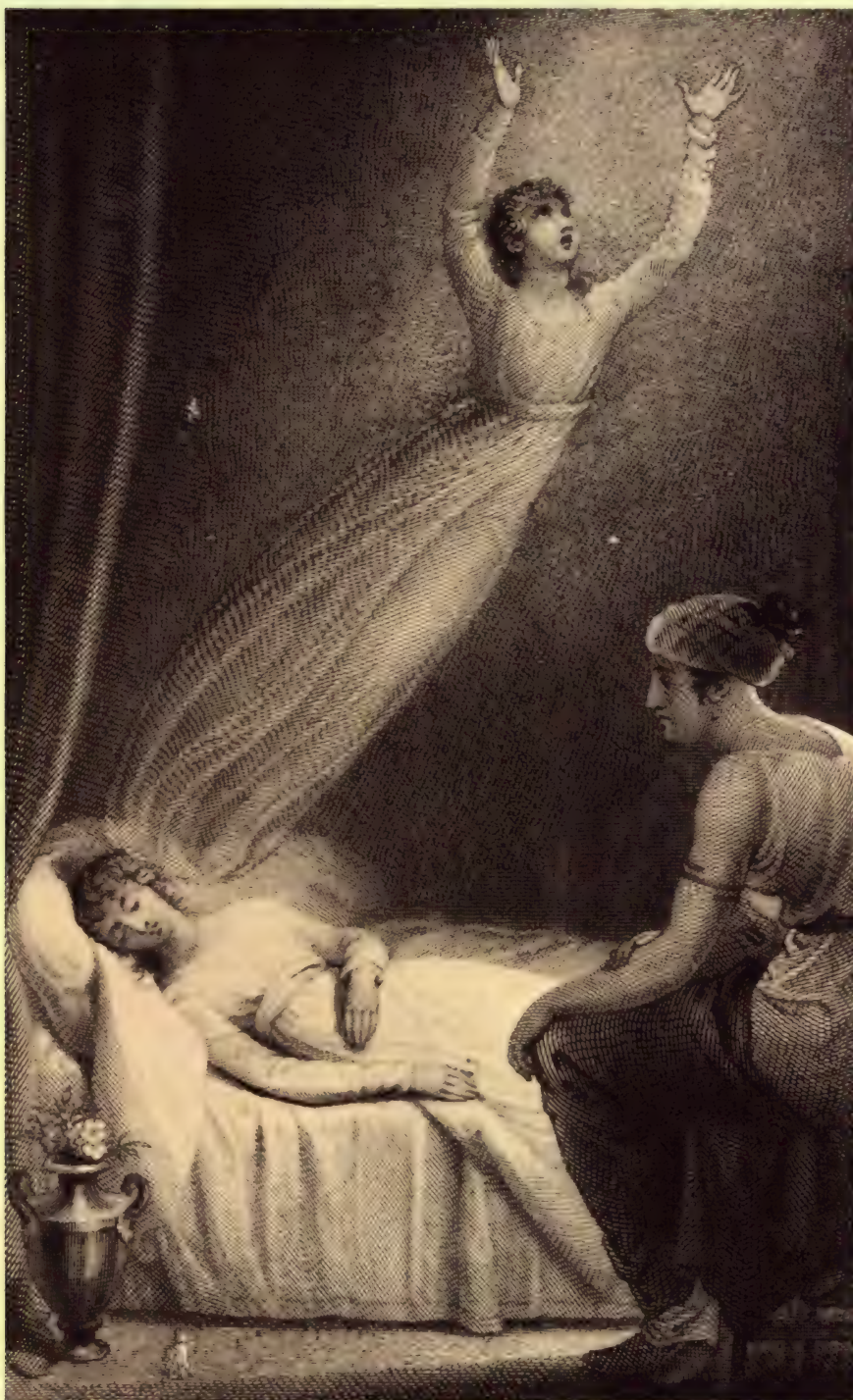
Moreover, unlike metal bending, it is of practical value in itself. Not only is it enjoyable and relaxing for most subjects, but regular practitioners have found it gives them an overall increase in sensitivity and awareness. For the first time in more than a century of physical research, it seems that 'paranormal' abilities can, given suitable conditions, be learned and produced to order in the laboratory.



# fact, imagination, or psi?

**What happens when someone's 'astral body' visits a place during an out-of-the-body experience? Does anything actually leave the physical body – or is an OOBÉ simply a dramatised form of telepathy or clairvoyance? A. J. ELLISON describes experiments conducted by scientists – himself included – to solve this problem**

The astral body leaves the physical body at death, in this illustration of 1829 by the French artist Corbould. People who experience OOBÉs often describe them in terms of a journey undertaken by the 'astral body'. What actually happens during an OOBÉ is still the subject of debate



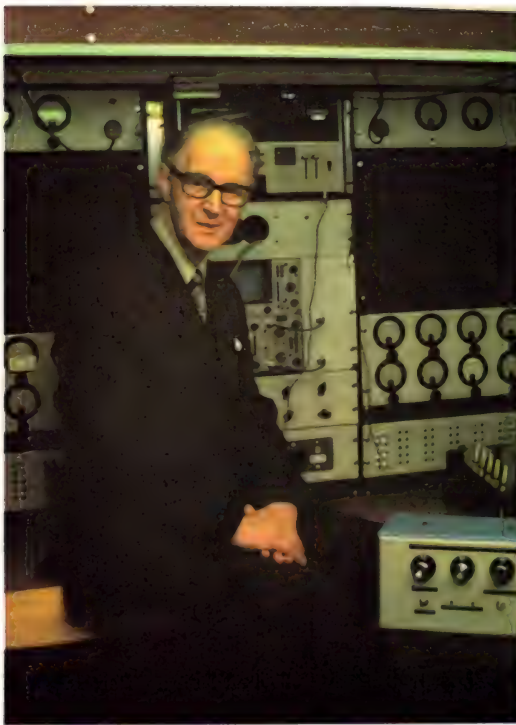
ONE OF THE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES in psychical research is how to eliminate the suspected intervention of telepathy – precognitive or coincidental. The problem is especially acute in the investigation of OOBÉs. The obvious way to test an OOBÉ is to ask the person undergoing the experience to 'visit' a place he or she has never seen when awake, and then ask for a detailed description of the surroundings, which can later be checked. But it seems that there is no way of knowing whether a real OOBÉ is involved, or whether the subject is using pure clairvoyance to gain the information – that is, 'knowing' facts about the physical world independently of the senses. Another interesting suggestion has been made: that having an OOBÉ may act as a trigger to make overt information that is lying passive in the subject's subconscious. Indeed, it could be that seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting are mere illusions, and that we in fact sense the physical world by clairvoyance.

To combat this problem as it relates to OOBÉs, I had built several years ago a box containing some fairly sophisticated electronic circuitry. With the subject of the experiment in an OOBÉ state, I could, by pressing a button at the front of the machine, make a three-digit random number appear at the back – out of my sight. I would then ask the subject to tell me the number at the back of the machine, and enter the number he gave me on another dial at the front of the machine. The machine would tally the numbers on the two dials and note whether or not the subject had been successful in stating the original number correctly. This procedure could be repeated any number of times to give a run of experiments. At the end of a run, the dials could be set to display the number of successes. (The machine could also indicate how many of the separate digits corresponded on each occasion, if this information was required.)

The important point about this method is that since at no time – before, during or after the experiment – are the random numbers in the mind of the experimenter, telepathy of any kind is ruled out. The next step was to use the box to test a number of subjects who, previous experiment had showed, were able to have OOBÉs when this was suggested to them under hypnosis; this ability is fairly common among good hypnotic subjects.

I started with a trial two or three runs in which, for speed, I looked at the numbers at the back of the box while the first subject was attempting to tell me what they were. These runs were remarkably successful. On two or three occasions, the subject was completely accurate. So we started a run of 25 tries in which I did not look at the numbers in the





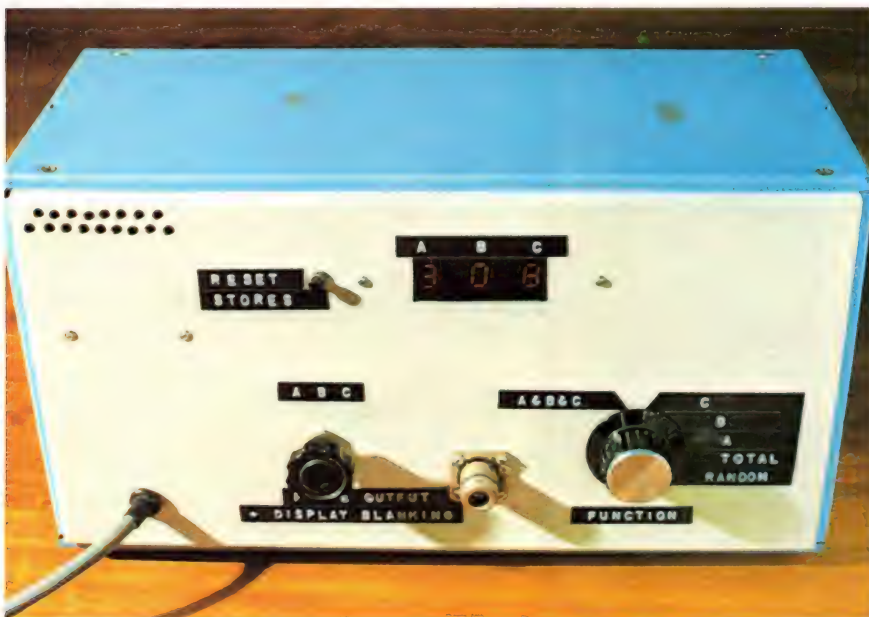
Professor Arthur Ellison (left), professor of electrical engineering at City University, London, has devised a method for investigating the nature of OOBES. A figure produced by a random number generator appears – seen by no one – at the back of a box (below); the subject of the experiment is then asked to go, in his 'astral body', and 'read' the number. The number he 'sees' is recorded on the dial at the front of the machine (bottom), and the machine checks whether or not the reading is correct. At no time is the original random number seen, in the ordinary sense, by anyone; thus a successful reading by the subject indicates that his OOBES is *not* a kind of dramatised telepathy

visit to Britain and was told about the machine. He volunteered to try a run immediately – unfortunately not giving us time to check that the box was functioning properly. He indicated that the numbers would 'just appear' in his mind, and the OOBES experience was not necessary in his case. This, of course, raises some interesting questions about the nature of OOBES – as already mentioned, it is possible that an OOBES can be considered to be a dramatised reconstruction of a memory of certain surroundings, incorporating information – such as the number on the dial on the back of the box – that is obtained by 'pure clairvoyance'. This is, of course, no explanation – what, after all, is 'pure clairvoyance'? – but there is certainly plenty of evidence that information can appear in the mind without any particular procedure, such as inducing an OOBES, being necessary. The psychic ran through a series of around 20 'guesses'. At the end I turned the dial to see how many he had got right, expecting to find a zero score – and, to my astonishment, the window indicated eight.

But the following morning I did a run myself, and also scored eight. Clearly, there was something wrong. Careful examination indicated a non-visible fault in a micro-circuit, resulting in all seven bars of the units digit being illuminated, forming the figure eight. Careful cleaning of the component in question reduced my score on a subsequent run to its usual zero.

## Beating the odds

The fourth subject to use the box was a famous British psychic. This time, the experiment was planned and the box carefully checked for correct operation. I did a run or two, and my research assistant did the same. We obtained typically low scores. After allowing plenty of time for the circuitry to warm up and stability to be established, and a final check, the visiting psychic made the first



window at the back, but used the method described above. Almost at once, the subject seemed to be in difficulty, and said that she was finding it impossible to 'read' the numbers clearly, as they were 'too small'. I suggested that she practise with small numbers set up by a friend at home (and looked at afterwards, for the recording of 'right' or 'wrong'), and asked her to return in a month or two to continue the more rigorous experiments using the box. It was no surprise to me, however, when she did not reappear.

A second hypnosis subject proved unable to read the figures at the back of the box under any conditions, and did not continue the experiments.

My third subject was a famous American psychic who came to our laboratory during a





## Out-of-the-body experiences

run of 20 tries. A score of eight! But a check by myself gave another score of eight. Again, there had to be something wrong with the equipment – and, sure enough, careful cleaning of the microcircuit again restored the box to normality. I did a run, my research assistant did a run – both resulting in the usual low scores. Everything was working correctly. The psychic did another run – and obtained another score of eight. But when we recleaned the equipment and tried again we obtained our average low scores. Had the equipment again been at fault? It was impossible to tell.

A sceptical observer would say that it was mere chance that a fault appeared in the equipment on two occasions when well-known psychics were the subjects of experiment. An experienced psychical researcher, however, might observe that this kind of thing often happens. It is as though the unconscious mind of the psychic, knowing that a high score was required, achieved this by the easiest available method – by using PK on the microcircuit rather than clairvoyance. But it is impossible to prove this contention: it merely remains a possibility. Meanwhile,

Research conducted at the Psychical Research Foundation in Durham, South Carolina, USA, appears to indicate that animals may be able to detect the presence of astral bodies. Psychic Stuart Blue Harary (below) was able to 'go', while in an OOB state, and calm a pet kitten (bottom). An objective measure of the kitten's distress was provided by placing it in a box marked into squares, and noting how much it moved

the random number box test of whether or not a psychic having an OOB state can 'observe' the normal physical world in any way when the possibility of using telepathy is eliminated awaits available opportunity and subjects for further research.

Dr Karlis Osis, the Research Officer of the American Society for Psychical Research, has conducted some interesting experiments with Alex Tanous to try to determine whether the observations conducted during OOBES are performed with something similar to the human eye. Osis required Tanous, in his OOB state, to 'look' through the window of a box in which was an optical system superimposing images that gave a certain



appearance to normal sight when viewed from a certain point in space. This appearance was in effect an illusion – something that did not physically exist – and the experiment was designed to answer the question of whether OOBES can be regarded as a kind of dramatised clairvoyance, or whether something (perhaps the 'astral body') actually travels from place to place during an OOB. Osis claims that his results indicated some support for the idea of a presence in the physical space in front of the box. There are, however, problems in the interpretation of his results: the limits of clairvoyance are, after all, unknown and, even though it was possible to choose the target patterns randomly so that no one knew what their appearance to the human eye would be, it may be possible for the unconscious mind of the subject to deduce the appearance from clairvoyant knowledge of the relative positions of the components in the box, and to dramatise the experience to produce the correct result. Osis claims that later experiments in which he placed physical sensors (strain gauges) in front of the window of the optical box seemed to indicate that some kind of physical object might be there during



## Miss Z and the hidden number



The first fully controlled laboratory experiment to investigate the nature of OOBES was conducted by Dr Charles Tart (left) of the University of California. Dr Tart's subject was a Miss Z, who reported having experienced OOBES since childhood. Wiring her up to an electroencephalograph, Dr Tart asked Miss Z to put herself into an OOB state. On a shelf above her head was a slip of paper on which was written a number selected by Dr Tart from mathematical random number tables before the beginning of the experiment. The wires from Miss Z's head to the electroencephalograph were designed to be of such a length that she could not physically get up and look at the number on the shelf without causing an interruption in the pattern on the electroencephalograph print-out.

Nothing significant happened on the first night of the experiment. On the second night, Miss Z was successful in

experiencing an OOB state, in the course of which she said she saw a clock on the wall above the shelf – she could not have seen this while lying down – and had 'read' the time as 3.15 a.m. A check on the electroencephalograph print-out revealed unusual brainwave patterns at that time. The third night she had a similar experience.

It was not until the fourth night that she attempted to read the figure on the slip of paper – and did so with complete success. She reported the time of her experience – by the laboratory clock – as between 5.50 and 6.00 a.m. At 5.57 a.m. on the electroencephalograph tape her brainwave patterns showed a disturbed output.

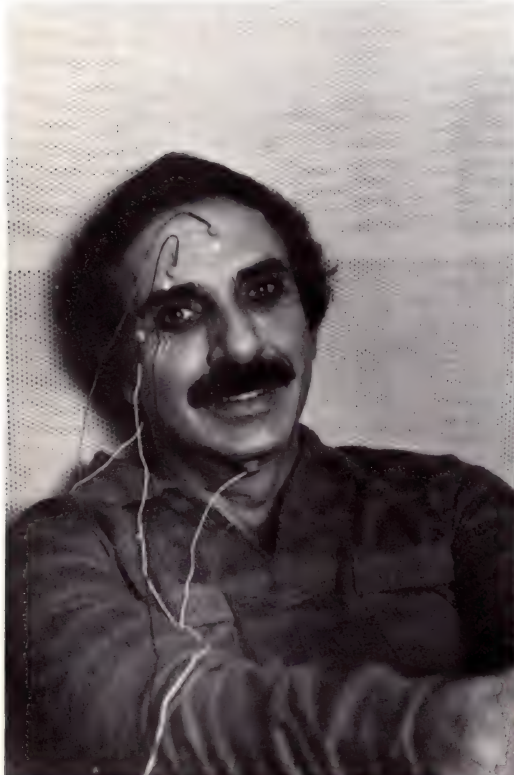
Dr Tart's experiment seemed to show that *something* paranormal was going on during Miss Z's OOBES. Professor Ellison's experiment is designed to answer the question, what?

OOBE observations: there seemed to be a tendency for more 'hits' on the optical targets when the gauges indicated activity.

Some interesting experiments using experimenter and psychic Stuart Blue Harary were conducted at the Psychical Research Foundation in Durham, North Carolina. The aim was to observe the behaviour of small rodents, snakes and kittens in the presence of an 'astral projection'. The kittens were put in a large open test box marked into squares. The normal random activity of the kittens could be expressed in terms of the



Does anything actually leave the physical body during an OOB state? Dr Karlis Osis (above), of the American Society for Psychical Research, has conducted experiments in which he places strain gauges in front of the site that the subject, psychic Alex Tanous (left, shown wired up to an electroencephalograph as he is during the experiments) is asked to visit



### Further reading

Norma Bowles and Fran Hynds with Joan Maxwell, *Psi search*, Harper & Row (San Francisco) 1978  
Kit Pedler, *Mind over matter*, Thames Methuen 1981

number of squares occupied by a kitten in a given period of time. In normal experimental conditions, the kittens tended to be frightened, cry and move about a great deal. Harary 'went', in an OOB state, to the kittens' box and tried to calm them. One of the kittens did indeed change in behaviour, its movement and activity both decreasing during the times when Harary was having an OOB state. The other kitten took no notice. Later experiments were not very significant, but it appears from the work done by Harary and other researchers that it might be worthwhile to investigate whether animals are better than machines as detectors of subjects having OOBES.

### Worlds of illusion?

One can reasonably conclude from all this that it may not be meaningful to take subjects' descriptions of their own experiences of OOBES too literally. An OOB state may be a mental construction consisting of memories of the physical world, with some information obtained through telepathy or clairvoyance superimposed on it. Eastern scriptures suggest that the 'astral world' to which many people believe we go after death (and which we visit in the 'astral body' in an OOB state) is a 'world of illusion', based perhaps on a combination of our memories of this world and our desires, both conscious and unconscious. As Professor H.H. Price has pointed out, such a world of mental images would be just like the world described by mediums and psychics, with all the individual differences one would expect. However, as Professor Price also pointed out, such a 'next world' would not be at all dissimilar from what some philosophers say *this* world is like. Perhaps a study of the OOB state will help us to a better understanding of ourselves and our perceptions and mental processes.



# When light beams bend

NEWCOMERS TO ufological research, accustomed to conventional physics, often throw up their hands in incredulity when they are confronted with reports of the extraordinary phenomena that occur during UFO sightings. Among the most remarkable of these are accounts of beams of light that stop short or make abrupt bends, without any evident

**Sometimes UFOs are reported to deflect light beams, defying known physical laws. CHARLES BOWEN relates a case from Australia and another, with many witnesses, from France**

absorbing, refracting or reflecting agencies to bring this about. The Trancas event, in Argentina, was a noteworthy example (see page 158). In that case 'tubes' of light were extended from UFOs, bent into curves, and withdrawn. In the two cases discussed here, beams from torches and car headlamps were manipulated in an equally 'impossible' way.



## 'Gaseous lights of all colours of the rainbow'

Close encounter of the second kind: Bendigo, Victoria, Australia, 4 April 1966

The London *Daily Express* of 12 April 1966 carried a story in which it reported that a motorist named Ronald Sullivan, aged 38, had been cruising along near Bendigo in southern Australia under a moonlit sky when, inexplicably, his headlight beams bent to the right. In a statement to the police at Maryborough, near Melbourne, he said that he avoided a crash only with difficulty and, as he drew to a halt, saw a display of 'gaseous lights' of all colours of the rainbow in a field alongside the road. The display was followed by the appearance of an object that rose vertically about 10 feet (3 metres) into the air – and then disappeared.

When Mr Sullivan returned to the scene a few days later, he found that another motorist, Gary Turner, had been killed in a crash at the same spot the previous evening. Meanwhile the police had made their investigations and found in a freshly ploughed field 50 feet (20 metres) from the fence a circular depression about 5 feet (1.5 metres) across, and varying from 2 to 5 inches (5 to 13 centimetres) in depth. The police regarded Sullivan – a highly respected businessman – as a reliable witness, and noted that he professed not to believe in UFOs.

The *Daily Express* story ended there. The corresponding Associated Press message was

more detailed: apparently, Mr Sullivan's encounter took place on 4 April 1966; he returned to the site on 8 April, and it was then that he learned of the fatal accident that had taken place on 7 April. A report in the *Melbourne Herald* added that he had driven to nearby Wycheproof where he had had his headlights checked – they were found to be in perfect working order – before going on to the police.

It was also revealed that the bent beams incident and the fatal accident occurred on a long straight stretch of road between Bendigo and St Arnaud, at a point 9 miles (15 kilometres) east of Bealiba, a small town nearly 130 miles (210 kilometres) north-west of Melbourne.

The information that was available left it a matter of speculation whether the bending of the headlight beams was accidentally caused by Mr Sullivan's car running into the UFO's 'force field' or whether, if the incidents of 4 and 7 April were connected in some way, the bending was the result of a deliberate action by a hostile agency – human or alien.

In a commentary in *Flying Saucer Review*, scientist Stephen L. Smith deplored the absence from the reports of important details such as the make of Mr Sullivan's car, the kind of dipping mechanism employed in its headlights, and the exact position on the beams at which they were bent. He pointed out that there were three possible explanations: that the beams were bent at source, that the bending occurred somewhere along the beams, or that the beams appeared bent through illusion or hallucination. Mr Smith wrote that his colleagues of the Cambridge University Investigation Group had suggested how an illusion might be brought about by the sudden extinguishing of the left-hand component of the headlight beam, which 'through its divergent character, would seem to have been bent to the right . . . [due] to a freak of reflection caused by the absence of dust particles by which headlight beams are normally seen'. If hallucination were the cause of the phenomenon, then was it spontaneously generated in the witness's brain, or was it caused by some outside agency – perhaps a force field emanating from the object he had observed?



## 'Beams that extended slowly'

Close encounter of the second kind: Taizé, Saône-et-Loire, France, 11 August 1972

The Centre for Ecumenical Meetings, Taizé – close to the landing point of what seemed to be an alien craft



People from all walks of life – most of them young folk – had gathered at the French spiritual centre at Taizé, some 6 miles (10 kilometres) north of Cluny, in eastern France, on 11 August 1972. Taizé is a Protestant monastery, and the gathering there was for celebrations organised by its founder, Friar Roger Schutz.

The events at Taizé in the early hours of 12 August 1972 were reported to the gendarmerie at Cluny, and afterwards to the French UFO organisation *Lumières dans la nuit*, for whom an investigation was conducted by a schoolmaster named Tyrode.

A group of about 35 of the young people had collected for discussions at a rustic open-air theatre situated among the visitors' tents near the crest of a ridge on which the community's buildings also stood. This site faced westwards over a gently sloping valley and a ridge known as 'la Cras', and successively higher ridges beyond that. The sky was overcast, and a light drizzle soon began to fall.

From the place where the earnest young debaters were grouped, a large ploughed field sloped down into the valley. A Monsieur F. Tantot, from Mâcon, a young man from Dijon and an Italian student were alerted at about 2 a.m. by Mademoiselle Renata, from Sardinia, to a 'star' that she could see descending. Before the others could swing round, however, she was already telling them that it had 'landed'. In a few moments, all the people in the theatre could see an object, seemingly stationary, on the slopes of la Cras, facing them and at the same level as themselves. All present had also heard the whistling noise as the UFO approached, and they could now see that it was bounded to the left by a field of cereal – its light colour showed the UFO up as dark by contrast – and to the right by a large tree standing on the ridge. The size of the UFO was estimated as 'larger than a coach' or at least 30 yards (30 metres) long.

All the witnesses now saw the UFO 'light up'. Seven yellow lights appeared in a row, then two orange ones outside and to the left of the object. After that, five of the yellow

- A Position of object
- B Position of witnesses
- C Position of dark mass







lights began to emit beams that extended slowly towards the ground. What appeared to be cupolas were observed above the two light beams at the very left of the row. When discussing the phenomenon with M. Tyrode, some of the witnesses said they had the impression that the beams were pylons on which the object was supported. Indeed, it was as if the beams were made of solid matter.

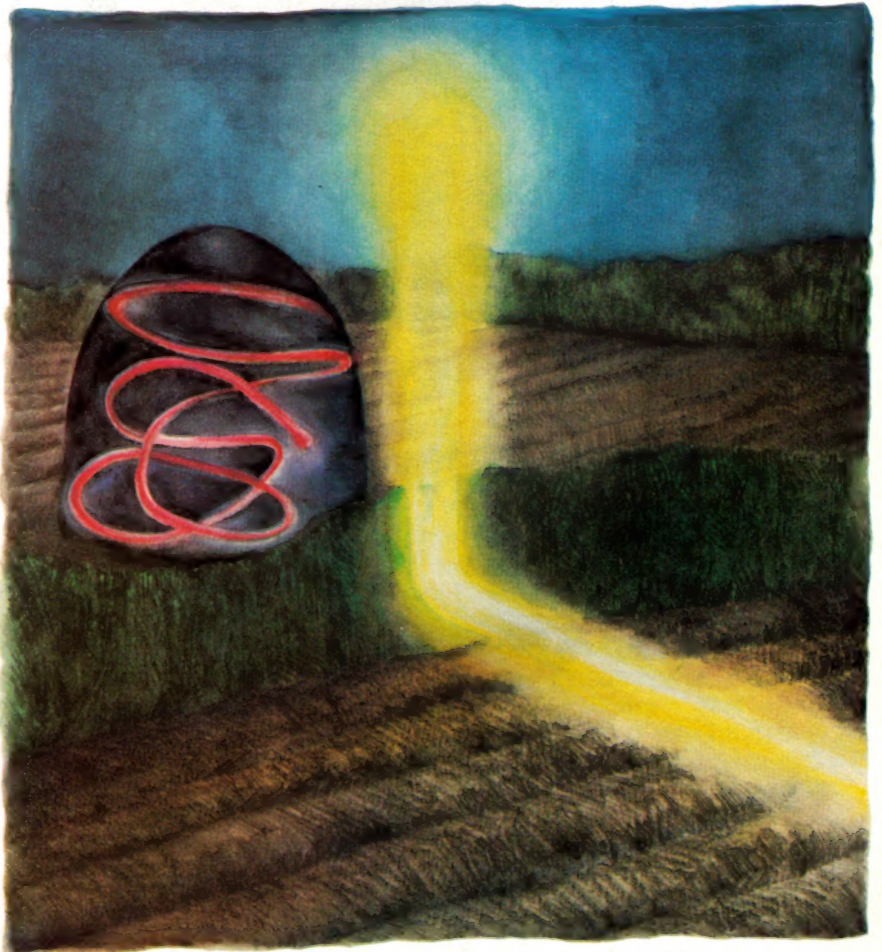
At this point some of the witnesses, particularly M. Tantot and the man from Dijon, felt tingling in their fingers and knees.

While the 'solid' beams of light were extending to the ground, a train of red sparks was seen at the right-hand end of the object. These were soon extinguished, and where they had been there were now seen three small discs, each with two red points of light. These began to gyrate around the main UFO, and these manoeuvres went on until the end of the sighting.

At about 3 a.m. the four original witnesses decided to have a closer look at the big object and, armed with torches, set off across the field, watched as they went by the remaining 30 witnesses in the theatre. These were later able to report that the main beams were rotating around individual vertical axes. The beam second from the left suddenly grew brighter, and showers of red particles filled the air around the four and covered the ground. A row of what looked like portholes appeared in white light, only to disappear

after 20 minutes, when the large beam to the left flashed several times.

By now the intrepid four had reached the middle of the field, and they became aware of a dark, haystack-shaped mass some 6 or 7 yards (5 or 6 metres) high, around which a point of red light moved in a haphazard trajectory. Between themselves and this mass, the witnesses thought they could see a hedge about 10 feet (3 metres) ahead of them – at a point where, they knew, no hedge existed. When a torch beam was shone towards the mass, the beam suddenly turned vertically upwards about 1 foot 6 inches (50 centimetres) from the hedge and, dispersing, was lost in the air. Subsequent attempts to illuminate the object, with all the torches the witnesses had with them, met with the same fate and, alarmed in the face of the bizarre unknown, the four were tempted to back off. However, when the lights on the UFO suddenly went out, only to flash back on again, and the three discs vanished into the big object, M. Tantot flashed his torch in its direction. As if in response, the largest beam from the UFO rose so that it shone directly at the witnesses. Dazzled, and feeling a surge of heat, they raised their hands to protect their eyes. Meanwhile, the UFO began to move away, until suddenly it accelerated and sped off towards Cluny. The time was 4.40 a.m. when it was lost from sight at Taizé.





# Post script

Your letters to  
THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,

I wonder if other readers have had a similar dream to the extraordinary one I experienced as a child of about eight.

It began with me as observer. I saw a handsome red-skinned woman of about 40, sitting on an elaborately carved bed in an elegant, but obviously archaic, room. She was quite calm, although through the square space that served as a window I could see fire in the sky and the whole house was shaking. At this point I *became* the woman.

A young man of 16 came into the room to urge me to get out of the house and flee to the harbour. He was 'my' son. At first I rejected the idea scornfully, saying I would not be seen in the street with 'the common people', but my son persuaded me. There was chaos and panic outside; huge chunks of masonry were falling on the crowds, flaming debris lay in our path. Somehow, hardly knowing where we were, we found ourselves on the quayside. Screaming people were overloading boats, and fights broke out everywhere. Suddenly the quay – which was made of a solid block of some semi-precious stone – sank, plunging us into the water. Battered and burned, we thrashed around, trying to cling on to flotsam. But it was useless. Water filled my mouth and lungs; I felt some pain. Then I was floating ecstatically up through what I can only describe as layers of translucent colours, beautiful beyond description. Eventually I reached a shore that was lined with pink sand, soft as silk. I sat humbly on the beach while creatures with huge, kind eyes moved slowly among the palm trees behind. I knew I had to wait 'for 200 years' (according to a voice in my head) before returning to Earth.

I woke up shattered by the impact of the dream, trying to hold on to the delicious feeling that accompanied the woman's death. Young as I was, I decided to write it all down – in a sort of school composition style, I suppose. When I had done so I wondered what title to give it. Suddenly the word 'Atlantis' popped into my head, although I had no idea what it meant.

I realise that it is difficult to convince people that we had no books at that time on the subject, nor had my parents any interest in, or indeed any knowledge of, the story of Atlantis. And in those days (it was about 1955) it was not a fashionable subject for radio programmes or such newspaper articles as I was likely to read. Besides, even if I had seen or heard something on the subject, it still remains a matter for conjecture as to how a child's subconscious could have 'replayed', in such detail, one of the legendary 'ends of Atlantis'.

But even now I don't know what the dream was trying to tell me. Did Atlantis really exist, and if so, was I that woman?

Yours faithfully,  
Shirley O'Sullivan

York, Yorkshire

Dear Sir,

With reference to premonitory dreams: I am one of the people who seldom remembers dreams, but one morning, while washing the breakfast dishes, my dream of the night before came flooding back to me.

I had dreamed I was in my kitchen, washing

dishes. Two women, who lived in a street running parallel with ours, were in the kitchen with me. One, who was standing near me at the sink, was doubled up with laughter, and nudged me to join in. The other woman was the butt of the joke; she was bristling with anger and hurt. Though I couldn't see her, I knew she was wearing a nurse's uniform, and that she was a neighbour of the first woman. Embarrassed, I looked out of the window and was startled to see thick black smoke rolling in great clouds across the rooftops from the direction of the street where the other women lived. I gasped and drew their attention to it, but as I gazed I realised that the 'smoke' was in fact great black *clouds* descending from the sky, beginning at the first house (where the nurse lived) and ending about two thirds of the way (where the 'laughing woman' lived). Then I woke up.

I described this dream to my next-door neighbour almost immediately after recalling it, confiding that I felt troubled about it, without knowing why. That evening at about 6 p.m. I was on my way out and a crowd of children ran by calling to each other about an accident that had just happened on a main road nearby. I told them to keep away from the scene as their presence would not be welcome there. Some duly turned away but others carried on. I walked on until I came to the street where the two women lived. From out of the first house (the nurse's house) dashed her little three-year-old boy, minus his trousers. He ran across the street and disappeared down a side lane opposite. I called after him, 'You'll have your Mummy after you, my boy!' and walked on, chuckling to myself. In due course I came to the main road in time to see two police cars and an ambulance, obviously going to the scene of the accident. It was only then that I realised that the three-year-old I had just seen was, in reality, a fine young man of nearly 18 and his mother, who had been a nurse before her marriage, had died about six years before.

On returning home about an hour and a half later, I was surprised to see little groups of women standing on doorsteps and talking in hushed tones. One of the women asked me if I had heard about the accident. She told me that three people had been killed in it – the driver of the van involved was one of the victims – as were his two passengers. One was the son of the 'laughing woman' of my dream. At this point I stopped the woman, finishing the grim list for her: the third victim was the boy I had 'seen' in my curious experience earlier that day. The woman was astonished that I knew about it, but I couldn't explain then.

But the next day I went back to talk to her, telling her about my dream and about the little boy I'd seen on my way down the street. She appeared to agree with me that my dream could have been some kind of warning of the tragedy to come, but I have often wondered since whether I had only remembered the last part of a much longer dream. Had the first part of the dream contained a *specific* warning, perhaps being carried over into the second part in the laughter of the woman?

Yours faithfully,  
Nan V. Davis (Mrs)

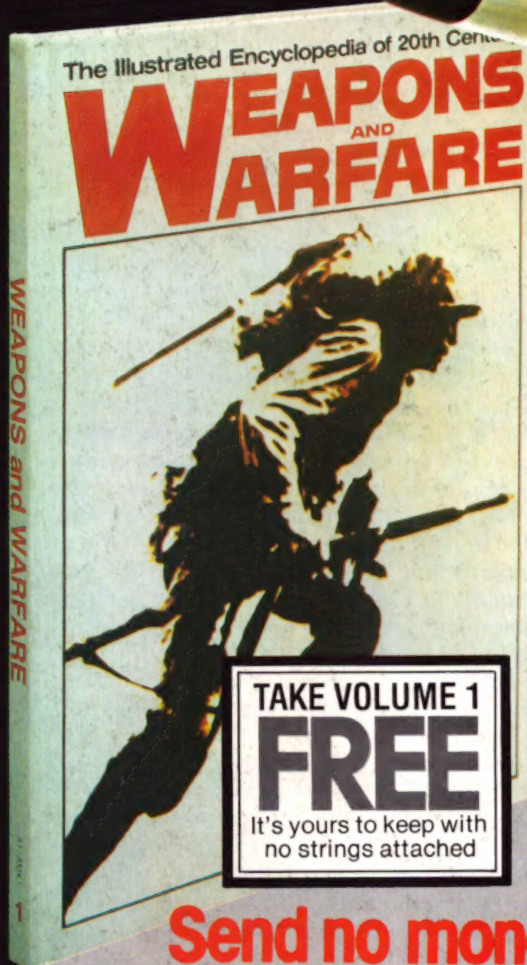
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